1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

[P. 182-C]

Death, Funerals, and Mourning

764.

Several early travelers mention burial customs among the Pygmies of the Ituri. Stuhlmann (1894) describes burial, with the corpse either stretched out or doubled up in a circular hole. Burrows (1898, 197), referring mainly to the Aka, says that, when a Pygmy dies, he is buried "and there is an end to him and his memory." He reports that there is no mourning and no memorials to mark the graves. Johnston (1902, 1904, 539) also mentions burial and says that important Mbuti are buried with supplies of food, tobacco, and weapons.

[184]

According to Schebesta, although burial in some form or another, generally following the villager pattern, was in common usage at the time he wrote, the northern archers formerly abandoned the corpse, placing it with its back against a tree. If someone died inside a hut, the corpse was left there for about two weeks, until decomposition had well set in. Then, without burying the remains, the camp was abandoned.

1: Turnbull E-4.5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Mombu FO31
Lese

[ARCHERS]

The southern archers affirm that they always used to burn their corpses. Nowadays the burial takes place beside the hut of the deceased, and the corpse, covered with a cloth, is passed out through an opening made in the side of the hut. It is placed in a hole in the ground, covered with bark and earth. The hut is then pulled down over the tomb, and household utensils are added to the pile. Mourning is profound and sincere among men and women, but ritual dances of mourning, such as those practiced by villager women, are unknown.[1]

In "Die Bambuti Pygmäen vom Ituri" Schebesta (1948, 543) gives details of a funeral he attended in a southern Lese village, and of an archer funeral, and compares the two. The archer funeral was of an old Mbuti who died after a short attack of smallpox. Schebesta received the news at six o'clock the morning following the death. On reaching the camp he found the corpse laid out in a new cloth, inside the hut. Nearby crouched the widow and eldest daughter. All the womenfolk of the camp were gathered outside the hut, crying and moaning. The eldest son had gone to the village to inform his father's *karé* (p. 179), and within two hours returned with three villagers, wailing. Meanwhile the Pygmies had agreed that the grave should be dug beside the hut. The most promi-

[1] This statement, again, is totally contrary to my experience among both archers and net hunters.

1: Turnbull E-4, 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 •
Mbuti
Mombu FO31
Lese

[ARCHERS]

[P·183-A]

P M 764 177

nent among the many archers who had hastened to attend the funeral took charge. He measured the corpse with his stick and drew the outline of the grave on the ground. His son, assisted by others, opened a grave, using pointed sticks, a hatchet, and a bush knife, and cleared the loosened earth with their hands. The crying of the women became louder, calling "*Afae!*" (father). A few women sat nearby, singing dirges. Not only the relatives mourned, but all present. With the help of the Lese *karé*, the floor of the grave was covered with sticks, then leaves. The womenfolk hurried to the edge of the grave as the corpse, decorated only with an arm ring, was brought through a hole in the side of the hut and placed in the grave. The wailing reached its climax; the wife, children, and even the eldest grown son, threw themselves on the ground as the men began to fill in the grave. One man had to hold the eldest daughter to prevent her from throwing herself into the grave. The earth was stamped down, and the mourners moved away, women and children and some of the young men crying. One daughter remained near the grave as the house was pulled down to cover it (after the household goods had been removed).

P [152]

P M [308]

P [152]

Shortly after the burial some men went off hunting. By three o'clock the entire camp was deserted, and a new one had been built by evening.

183 (B)

[ARCHERS]

Schebesta (1948, 545) cites this burial as evidence of band and lineal solidarity (e.g., the prominent part played by neighboring bands in the funeral), and of the importance of the *karé* relationship. Significant differences between the Mbuti and the Lese ceremonies were the absence, in the archer funeral, of the sacrifice of a hen over the grave, the absence of the official mourners in their clothes and white paint, of a goat offering, and above all of the absence of a long palaver, following the burial, to place the blame for the death. The question of blame did arise after the Mbuti burial described, but it was the Lese who were primarily interested. Nor, according to Schebesta, does a death have such far-reaching social consequences among the archers as among their villager neighbors.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The relationship between the Efe archers and their villager neighbors is mentioned above. The two peoples are associated in a hereditary system, based on trade, strengthened by the

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

Death, Funerals, and Mourning

264 [184] [768] Burial is the custom among the net hunters, as with the archers. In general it follows the same pattern, taking place inside or immediately beside the hut of the deceased; the hut is pulled down over the grave and the camp deserted immediately. No weapons, utensils, ornaments, or food are buried with the corpse. [961] Nor is there any attempt to find the cause of death and to place the blame.

165 Most deaths occur from causes easily understandable to the Pygmy. Infection is rare. Pneumonia and dysentery are the major fatal illnesses. The greatest single cause of accidental mortality is a fall from a tree (the trees are of great height, with few low branches to break a fall). Other possible and not infrequent causes of accidental death include the falling of dead branches on top of huts, which may kill several people at one time. Death through burning may occur owing to the habit Pygmies have of getting up at night to relieve themselves, then squatting down almost on top of the fire to get warm. At such times they smoke [276] strong tobacco, which they inhale deeply and sometimes faint as a result, falling into the fire.

[P 222-B]

*1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

1. A Pygmy who had been visiting another band returned to his own camp and reported that a cousin of his had died. A wailing, suddenly started, was taken up, mostly by women but also by men and children, all over the camp. It lasted for 10 minutes and was repeated several times during the evening for five minutes at a time. Everyone went to sleep as usual; there was a final wail on waking the next morning. 763

2. A newborn infant (son of one of the most important hunters in the band) died at night. Only its father and mother wailed. Early in the morning the parents dug a pit in the house and buried the baby, wrapped in a small mat, with no ceremony. The next morning the couple dismantled the house and, using the same material, rebuilt it on the other side of the clearing. That night the father danced as usual. 763 764.

3. An old Mbuti woman died while visiting the village. She was the mother of three of the male members of the band. Most of her relatives were with her when she died, and they wailed. When the news was received back in the hunting camp, such of her relatives as remained there wailed. Only one of them, one of the great hunters of the band, left to attend the burial. 763

4. There was an epidemic in a hunting camp, [P.222-D] 763 731 165

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

764 miles away. There was some suggestion that the Mbuti should be buried in the village of his patron, but the eldest son refused and said that the forest was his father's "earth," and this was where he should be buried.

The grave was dug by Mbuti and villagers, about 4 feet deep, with half of it 1½ feet deeper. The body was placed in the deep section, on its side, facing north, covered with sticks and phrynium leaves. Then everyone threw in earth and filled the grave. The women at the funeral became hysterical at this point, falling to the ground and beating themselves. The dead man's second wife tried to throw herself into the grave on top of the body. When the grave was filled, everyone sat down and talked and smoked. The youngest son of the deceased had been playing around quite happily all the time. After smoking, villagers and Mbuti all washed their hands and feet in a nearby stream.

152 Both Patrick and Anne Putnam claim that there is, among the Epulu Mbuti, formal and controlled wailing, also wailing as a manifestation of genuine grief among both men and women. Men and women will weep apart during

[177] [1] Suggestions of this kind are sometimes made by the Mbuti in their village context, in imitation of the villagers. They by no means necessarily indicate Mbuti belief.

[P 223-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P. 223 - C]

the official wailing, as well as before or after it. 152

Anne Putnam (1954, 77) mentions the opinion of a Pygmy hunter concerning the village custom of burying the dead in a cemetery. He is reported as saying, "There the ground locks everyone's arms together and it isn't comfortable." 764 • 829

She also refers (1954, 81) to village speech-making following a burial, during which the cause of the death is hinted at. On one occasion, the death of a young Pygmy girl in the village, the villagers attributed the calamity to the evil-eye and roused a relative of the girl to vow vengeance. The next morning, however, the Pygmies all went hunting, despite the assurance of the villagers that it was dangerous to go hunting for three days after any death and that no game would fall into their nets. Four antelope were caught. 763 761 [754] 765 177 224

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 •
Mbuti
Zaire FO1

These Mbuti, however, just as much as others, *appear* to have adopted villager religious beliefs and practices. This could be taken as symptomatic of a much closer relationship involving a shared system of values. We cannot help noticing, further, that by retaining a monopoly of ritual specialists the villagers effectively seem to assert their superiority over the Mbuti. When birth or death takes place among the Mbuti while they are in the vicinity of the village, the local villagers take a prominent part in the appropriate festivities, appropriate according to their custom, that is. Marriage between Pygmies, while not always subject to ceremonial "ratification" in the village, is usually performed twice: once according to the simple Mbuti custom of arranging and effecting an exchange of brides with the necessary courtesies of prestation and feasting but with no other ceremonial; and once according to the

[P.251-D]

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 PO4 Pygmies PO4
Mbuti

Upon establishing what was, for me, the first hunting camp of the year, there commenced what I might here call the real mourning festivities, as opposed to the festivities imposed upon the Mbuti when in the village. One of the persons to die had been an old and much respected and beloved Mbuti lady, Balekimito. Her death was made the occasion for a great *molimo* festival, which within the first three months of my field trip brought me right to the heart of the Mbuti magico-religious system. Subsequent investigation elsewhere, even among archer bands, revealed a degree of similarity that makes it possible to generalize widely from the base of this single band study, in this realm at least.

I followed the same band throughout its entire series of migrations, living in every camp it established during the course of some fourteen months. During this time the band was sometimes entirely in residence in the Epulu village, in which case I was there with it; on occasion it was entirely in the forest, and sometimes it was divided between the two. When it divided I simply had to distribute my attentions as the occasion seemed to demand. Sometimes I was able to make use of an informant in the other division, and I trained three Mbuti youths for this purpose.

On two occasions I was able to take quick side trips to other parts of the forest, but I left the bulk of my search for comparative material among other bands until I felt that one complete annual cycle had been completed. It so happened that the process of fission and fusion was more systemized than I had anticipated, and my records of consecutive changes in the composition of the hunting band clearly showed the pattern in time for me to be able to spend a few months in different parts of the forest, with both net-hunters and archers, and even allowed me to make a brief excursion to the Kivu district and to Ruanda and Burundi, though the material gathered there was not immediately comparable.

FIELD TECHNIQUE

Before myself assessing the results, and in order to enable others to assess and evaluate the material here presented, it is important that field method should be discussed. The particular technique I employed was born of the particular situation. I do not claim that any other technique was impossible, but I do claim that for the re-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

sults I wanted I had no alternative. Other methods would have produced different, though not necessarily contrary, results.

However, there were inherent limitations in the technique followed, which involved close identification and integration between myself and the Epulu net-hunters. For one, by identifying myself with the Mbuti, my relationships with the villagers were automatically worsened; the mere fact that I preferred to study the Mbuti rather than the villagers was ground enough for hostility. But being accepted by the Mbuti in their forest hunting camps was a privilege denied to most villagers (though few would have wanted it), and learning to speak the village language with a strong Mbuti accent that made it almost unintelligible except to other Mbuti added further fuel to the fire. This all made it extremely difficult for me to see the Mbuti/Villager relationship from any but the Mbuti point of view, though I tried, at the end of 1958, to establish a better rapport with villages both in and beyond the Epulu area.

However, it was impossible for me not to take sides. Had I wished to work as an outside observer I am not even sure that it could have been done, as I do not think such an observer would have been tolerated for long in the forest camps. And as an outsider I would certainly have been denied familiarity with many aspects of Mbuti life, particularly the all-important *molimo* festival. In fact, as an "insider" I was able to observe the process of exclusion of the few outsiders temporarily admitted to a forest camp. But in any case I was quickly forced by purely practical considerations to take sides.

During the burial proceedings in the village, for instance, in the first month of my stay, I was invited by both Mbuti and villagers to take part. But whereas the villagers wanted me to stand by and watch the digging of the grave under villager supervision, the Mbuti wanted me to help out with the digging. By acceding to the latter wish I automatically lost my status among the supervisors, and in fact became unclean and had to ritually wash myself with the other gravediggers. And during the post-burial meeting of the men, when the villagers all argued among themselves as to which Mbuti witch had caused the death, I had the choice of listening on one side of the grave with the villagers or of standing on the other side with the Mbuti and being associated in this way with their mirth and their ridicule of what was, to them, an utterly nonsensical procedure. And when on one occasion a burial took place on the morning of the day that a wedding was to be held in a neighboring village, I had the

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

choice of staying to listen to the villagers ceremonially wail on behalf of the dead Mbuti, or of going off with the rest of the burial party, as soon as the grave was filled, to the wedding. I found it more sensible as well as more congenial to prefer the wedding to the wailing.

These are only a few of the many instances where a choice had to be made, where no middle road was possible even had it been desirable. The result is then necessarily to some extent one-sided, for no matter how I tried to effect a balance by subsequent investigation, I still feel an urgent need to conduct further field work, taking the village standpoint.

Once started on the road, the process of identification was swift, but never complete enough to render it impossible to observe intelligently and with deliberate detachment. Such temporary blindness to other points of view as occurred took some time to wear off, and this was perhaps the major drawback of the technique, and one that should be borne in mind in the more interpretive parts of this work, for it resulted in a number of unasked and therefore unanswered questions.

Integration demanded a number of things, one of which was that I should at all times be as fully mobile as any Mbuti. This cut down the belongings that I could carry with me; a blanket, a single change of clothes, a typewriter, paper and pencils. With a bundle of this size on my back I was able to travel as fast as was necessary whenever the band moved from one camp to another. It meant that I was economically dependent upon the band, however, so some kind of equilibrium had to be reached. I was not successful as a hunter, being too large and clumsy, and I did not carry a gun nor did I wish to acquire food in this way. When within easy reach of the village, then, I would acquire supplies of village foods, such as plantains, beans, rice and peanuts, at the same time that the Mbuti got their supplies. Instead of barter or theft I used currency, but bought only comparable quantities of exactly the same kind of food as the Mbuti. It was then cooked, usually by a youth who acted as general assistant, informant, guide, mentor and censor, but sometimes by myself or by another bachelor, and shared, as was the custom, among any bachelors who were around at the time. As was also the custom, I was adopted by a woman whose husband was away, but who still had his hunting net and sent it out each day with her stepson. She also sometimes cooked for me, and always built my hut, as she did for the rest of her family.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

to his credit, increasing his prestige and also somewhat increasing his trading opportunities. The trade is mainly thought of in terms of meat and labor on the side of the Mbuti, village foods, clothes and tobacco on the side of the villager. A fairly friendly relationship does sometimes develop between two *karé*, who, regardless of the status differentiation, undergo the whole *nkumbi* together, suffering the same ordeals side by side, and are perhaps more united by age than they are separated by the status differentiation.

The political aspects of *karé* brotherhood reinforce the economics, not only serving as a basis for compensation against a migrant Mbuti, but also for extending the *karé* relationship to link the Mbuti's *kpara* with the village boy's father. The relationship is primarily between individuals, but it nonetheless creates felt obligations between the families involved, and one family of villagers may invoke the help of another family in a dispute, through an Mbuti *karé* link. The kinship ramifications of *karé* brotherhood are still far from clear from the village point of view, and it seems that the introduction of the Mbuti to the system may have somewhat disorganized the traditional system. For the Mbuti there is no connection between *karé* and kinship, and effectively there can be none among the villagers. If there were, then the formation of a *karé* tie between *kpara* and their own Mbuti would be incestuous, and the formation of such ties with unrelated families, conceived of as a sibling relationship, would effectively prohibit marriage in that direction and create an impossibly confused dual kinship system. Yet *karé* do refer to each other sometimes as "brother," and take advantage of their thus extended kinship relations.

The religious aspects of *karé* brotherhood are far less easy to define, and far less easy for the investigator to determine because they are seldom, if ever, discussed. I have never heard such a discussion, unless I instigated it, except on the occasion of the death of a villager. On the death of an Mbuti it is generally only the other aspects of the *karé* relationship that are discussed, involving liability for funerary expenses, compensation for outstanding obligations, divination of the cause of death. But when a villager dies the Mbuti *karé* is introduced into the heart of the funerary ritual, having to perform divers functions such as beating the villager's wives, leading an attack upon all close kin of the deceased, conveniently clustered together for the purpose, "to drive away evil," as the villagers explained it among themselves and to me. The Mbuti *karé* is also made responsible for providing certain foods for the deceased and, I believe, certain herbs

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

with which the body of the villager is treated before burial. Owing to my somewhat peripheral relationship with the villagers I was not allowed to witness the more intimate rituals when the *karé* Mbuti was closeted with the deceased on one occasion for about three hours, on another occasion for one hour. Nor was I able to elicit much from the Mbuti, who said that they knew nothing about it, and only did what they were told to do by the villagers. When asked what that was, they repeated the above information, which was as much as I had gathered from the villagers, and no more except a few colorful and imaginative details about the appearance and odor of the corpse. This being clearly something better investigated from the villager side, I did not press the matter. It seems sufficiently well established, however, that the ritual connection between *karé* is considerable as seen by the villagers, and this was borne out on one occasion when an important Bira noble died and the entire funeral ceremony, including the burial, was held up for a day and a half because of the non-appearance of the dead man's Mbuti *karé*. On this occasion the Mbuti eventually arrived on the run carrying a spear, loudly shouting his complaints at being brought from the forest for such stupidity (again the term *mbafu*). There were several hundred villagers assembled, and the Mbuti ran through them to the compound of the deceased. He evidently knew in advance what was expected, and broke his way in to the closed hut where the widows were wailing. There was great concern among the villagers because he took his spear with him, and they said he might kill the women, but they did nothing to prevent him. Happily there was a full complement of widows at the subsequent burial.

The villagers recognize that they cannot force the Mbuti *karé* to fulfill their obligations by political or economic pressure, but they now have another weapon. By the act of ritual circumcision, according to tribal lore, the Mbuti are placed in a direct relationship with the tribal village ancestors, and by the *karé* bond each Mbuti is placed in a direct relationship with the protective spirits that look after the welfare of their respective individual villager partners. Every step of the *nkumbi* reinforces the authority of the tribal ancestors, through the supernatural powers at their disposal, over the Mbuti as well as over the villager initiates. Failure to fulfill "kinship" or *karé* obligations on the part of the Mbuti cannot be dealt with by the legal mechanisms available to the villagers, but it can now be countered by supernatural sanctions. Villager lore defines the Mbuti responsibili-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

craft or to a breach of marital taboos, as indeed are any disasters, natural or unnatural, that befall the couple. The Mbuti, not having any traditional means of divination, are considered by the villagers to be dependent on them for help, though a few Mbuti have learned the art and become quite highly respected by the villagers. Sometimes if villagers come to hear of a marital dispute within a band, they will try to settle it by reference to divination, and if so the Mbuti appear to accept the settlement without question, in the village, but in no way allow it to impinge upon the reality of the situation in the forest. So once again the only dependency that exists is in the minds of the villagers.

DEATH

Even when it comes to the greatest crisis of all, death, the Mbuti seem to accept all the externals of village ritual but none of the implications. The invariable accusation of witchcraft and the equally invariable mention of supernatural sanctions as an alternative cause of death are made to remind the Mbuti not to falter in fulfilling their obligations to their *kpara*. Village insistence upon the unnatural causes of death serves to sow enough seeds of doubt in the mind of the Mbuti to cause at least momentary fear.

The actual ritual of burial is conducted under strict village supervision, the necessary payments being made by the *kpara*. The *kpara* and his family, as well as many other villagers, attend personally in the procession to the grave, and the *kpara* is almost certain to take a prominent part in the subsequent discussion as to the cause of the death and be present at the divination, if one is held. But whereas the Mbuti generally subject themselves to village ritual with the best of grace, they become quickly impatient following the burial of the dead and sometimes simply walk out of the *baraza* where the cause of death is being determined, leaving it entirely to the villagers to decide whatever pleases them. The village preoccupation with death and its unnatural causes disquiets the Mbuti, and when an Mbuti dies in a village there is frequently voiced suspicion that somehow the village is responsible; maybe one of the old curses is at work, perhaps a neglected *kpara* is employing a sorcerer to seek revenge, or, more likely, it is impersonally simply the village itself that caused the death.

Among themselves the Mbuti do not bother to settle the question, if they ask it, but if they feel that the village is to blame in some un-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

defined way, they do not hesitate to return at once to the forest. On the other hand, if they consider the death perfectly natural, they do not want to be bothered with a senseless preoccupation with causes. They know that in the course of the discussion the villagers will find opportunity to raise a number of issues better forgotten, such as unfulfilled obligations, and they are also uneasy at keeping the name of the dead person alive, in this way, for longer than is necessary. The forest procedure would simply be to bury the body, probably by pulling the hut down on top of it, then to abandon the camp and build a new one, never again mentioning the dead person by name.

On one occasion already cited (p. 10), an Mbuti funeral party returning from the grave converted itself into a wedding party. On another occasion, when the Mbuti were in a particularly festive mood and were bent on a long stay in the village, they played along with the witch-hunt even to the point of suggesting a second diviner from another village to check the findings of the first, stretching the proceedings out in this way for nearly a week. This meant that all the "mourners" (and Mbuti from villages up to twenty miles away came to this funeral) had to be fed for that long by the villagers. When the final act was done and the diviner had pointed out the witch that had "caused" the death, the Mbuti became annoyed that the villagers said something would have to be done about it, talking about a propitiation and a cleansing ceremony, with restitution. When the Mbuti saw they could not talk the villagers out of these less popular final rites, they returned to the forest, taking the "witch" with them.

On the few occasions on which I have seen the Mbuti apparently go through with the act until the very end—that is, divining the witch, accusing him or her, trying the case, giving judgment and going through the necessary cleansing rituals and actually making the necessary restitutive payments—it was when they already had a grievance against a certain person and chose this way of expressing it. On each such occasion there was not, among the Mbuti, the slightest thought that the "witch" actually had anything to do with the death. On two occasions the accused was a woman singularly well equipped to appear as a witch, her face being almost entirely eaten away by yaws. She was actually extremely well liked, but nonetheless she belonged to the volatile Cephu family who were always joining and breaking away from the main band, and she was very loud in her comments about that main band. Further, her husband, Aberi, normally also well liked, was particularly quick-tempered and a disturbing element.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

oughly as possible, it seems that among both Bira and Ndaka, and I believe also among the Lesé, death is believed to put fellow clansmen of the deceased in great danger from the *keti*, or evil spirits. The object of the *molimo* is twofold, then; it must help the deceased on his way, giving him what protection it can, and it must protect the living, who will be in a state of ritual danger throughout the period of mourning.

During that period the *molimo* meets regularly, at nighttime, in the house of the senior surviving member of the clan, in whose possession the *tete* is held. Only adult male clansmen are admitted, and the sound of the *tete* is the audible evidence of the invisible presence of their totemic guardian spirit. Specially prepared food is offered to the spirit, and the rest is eaten by the men. No women are allowed to participate in any way, even by cooking the food, according to all informants. However, I had been told the same thing about the Mbuti and found it to be different, and do not accept this information without some reservation. It would seem, though, that women generally are excluded from the *molimo* of the villagers, and indeed it really is no concern of theirs.

During the proceedings, which may last an hour or so, the men wail and call out the name and/or the kinship term of address of the deceased; his praises are recited and he is commended to the ancestral spirits. At the same time, the praises of the surviving clan members are similarly recited, and mention is made of the way in which they have upheld tribal lore and observed all the rules of clan exogamy, and have increased the number of attendant Mbuti. Continued protection for the living is requested, particularly for the period of mourning. Apparently no Mbuti take part in this part of the ceremony, though there seemed to be some disagreement over this and my impression was that the associated Mbuti are not prohibited from attending, but effectively seldom, if ever, do.

Upon the death of an Mbuti the *kpara* will not only oversee the burial and funerary ceremonies and divination, he will also want to hear announced the calling together of the men of the *molimo*. Sometimes he will leave it at that, but if the Mbuti continue to stay in the village and hold any *molimo* meetings in their village camp, the *kpara* may attend one or two meetings. It is very noticeable that when he does, the meeting runs a completely different course, centering around some erotic dancing by the younger men and a small amount of singing. The *molimo* trumpet, which is the Mbuti counterpart of

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

to make jokes at any excess of zeal on the part of any mourner. Young children continue playing as though nothing were going on; youths sit morosely by themselves, or wander off into the forest on foraging expeditions.

The moment death occurs there is a renewed burst of wailing, then the camp begins to quiet down. In the forest the practice is to scratch a shallow hole in the floor of the hut and bury the deceased person there, pulling the hut down over the grave. The camp is then abandoned, nothing being left to indicate the grave site, nothing being buried with the body except maybe a few very personal belongings such as bark cloth, bracelet or necklace. All other property is divided before the camp is abandoned. If death takes place in a village, then the Mbuti leave the funeral arrangements in the hands of the villagers.

If death occurs suddenly, the same procedure applies except that the period of wailing is shorter. In either case burial takes place the same day, if enough daylight is left, or as early as possible the following day. During burial, either in the village or in the forest, there is likely to be a final outburst of wailing from the relatives, particularly female, and some may try to throw themselves into the grave. In the village the eldest son is the chief mourner, and is supported by either a friend or another relative, younger or older.

In the village the entire band takes part in the burial procession, and those who dig the grave, under villager supervision, are youths and not necessarily connected in any way with the deceased, other than by band membership. They laugh and joke, sometimes even when the body is being lowered into the grave. Mbuti elders only take exception to this if they see that it is annoying the villagers. On the other hand if the formal wailing becomes too loud and enthusiastic, as the villagers like it to be, the elders object strongly. Particularly do they object to excessive demonstrations of grief from anyone who is not a close relative. Their main objective, it seems, is to restore "quiet" to the camp as soon as possible. The moment burial is over only the genuine sobbing of the immediate family is permitted in the forest, and this may be heard coming from their huts at any time of the day or night, never in public. In the village, however, there is still an obligatory mourning period, and about three times each day, for about two or three days, sporadic formal wailing breaks out in the village camp.

If a child dies the grief is less widespread, and in the case of a very small child the camp may not even be abandoned; only one hut will be pulled down and deserted. The child may even be buried within

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

of the most dramatic festivals possible. The *molimo* is not concerned with the death of the individual, nor with securing safe passage for the soul, but rather with affirming a belief in life and in the continuity of life and in the continuity of the band, despite the fact of death.

It seems, from inquiry in all parts of the forest, that there were many different ways of burying the dead and that no uniform custom existed; rather that, as now, each band had its own preferences. The most common method now, and apparently in the past, is simply to pull the hut down over the corpse, the body having been buried in a shallow pit dug in the ground or simply left on the bed, covered with leaves. In some bands the hut is then burned, in others it is left, but the general practice is to move camp at once. If it is too late to move that day, the family concerned will sleep out in the open until they are able to build a new hut in the next camp.

On some occasions bodies are buried up in trees, and in the south-eastern region of net-hunters this is how the Mbuti say they dispose of dead lepers. Nearly all Mbuti say that in the old days they buried their dead in holes in the ground, filling the holes in afterward so that the animals would not find the bodies. Today it is usual, throughout the forest, to wash the body before disposing of it in any of these ways. But this, and other practices such as scenting the corpse, wrapping it in a cloth if one is available, raising and lowering it three times before burial, and orienting the body in its resting place, vary according to the practices of the local villagers, and are almost certainly to a large extent borrowed from them. The Mbuti seem impatient and unconcerned about such details, and if they attend to them they do so only perfunctorily. They are particularly reluctant to allow anything of any possible value to be buried with a body, and if the burial takes place in a village and the villagers insist on using cloths and sleeping mats, the Mbuti will do their best to retrieve these unseen, at the last moment.

Similarly, head-shaving seems to be of little significance to the Mbuti, though they frequently do shave when a member of the band dies. But, unlike the villagers, they are not consistent in the practice, and they leave their hair lying around where it has fallen to the ground, whereas the villagers are scrupulously careful to collect their own hair cuttings, which they take off into the forest, or to a stream, and secretly hide.

The explanation given for self-mortification is that all the immediate family feel responsible, to some extent, for a death in their midst.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

became bitter and went far away until they had killed and eaten someone. Their bitterness then left them and they returned and the *ofa* ended. The Mbuti archers in this region deny they do this, but agree that it is a woman's job to wail. A man's job is to hunt. A man will say, "We are glad you are dead, now you can guide us to good hunting." (The Epulu net-hunters claim to say the same thing when the *molimo* is over.) Some Lesé refer to the same custom as *chachima*.

Over to the east, I found that the Plains Bira have a similar custom called *masoso*. Among the Forest Bira it seems to be a part of what they call their *molimo*. Again the women of the family are expected to wail formally and to exact tribute from visitors coming to the village of the deceased. The men argue about problems of inheritance, and conduct the burial and purification rituals.

Among all the villagers it is stressed that any such death ritual concerns only the family of the deceased. Whatever other similarities there may be between their practices and those of the Mbuti in this connection, a restriction on participation along kinship lines is not one of them. For the Mbuti a death is mourned and grieved by any who have reason for feeling a personal loss. This means primarily the immediate family and age mates. These are the people responsible for the disposal of the body, though others will help if help is needed. The band as a whole reacts to the loss however, and it is the responsibility of the band as a whole to celebrate the death in such a way as to restore the normality of life. This is the *molimo*.[3]

[3] The wider structural significance of the *molimo* is discussed in the last two chapters, "Principles of Organization."

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

An occasion such as that described (Turnbull, *ibid.*) for old Balekimito would lead to a greater *molimo* without any hesitation, however, for the death of this much loved old lady affected everyone's *roho*. On the other hand, the *molimo* held for Cephu's daughter Teresa was initiated by Njobo, Cephu claiming he did not have a trumpet. It was held not so much out of respect for the girl but because conditions were bad at the time, there being much sickness and discontent. However, Cephu did not seem to be pulling his own weight, economically, and so the festival came to an abrupt end after only a week. If people found their *roho* upset at all, that was more because of Cephu's cupidity than because of the death of his daughter.

To recapitulate the essential elements of the greater *molimo*, as held for Balekimito:

Death is accepted as a natural event and does not lead to any accusations of witchcraft or sorcery, except in the village context. Such grief as is expressed is genuine, and not formal, again except in the village context. It is accepted with regret, and although regarded as natural and inevitable, there is nonetheless a feeling that this is the one really imperfect thing in Mbuti life. The expressed belief that death comes when the forest is sleeping does not quite tally with the factual acceptance of death by the Mbuti, but there is absolutely no feeling of resentment or blame attached to the forest because of death. The felt need to "awaken" the forest and to "rejoice" the forest is occasioned more by the fact that all the living have been brought closer to death and have, to some extent, been touched by it. They consequently need reassurance, not only for the continuation of their own lives but for the continuity of the Mbuti.

The factual attitude to death is seen in the practice of burial, which in the forest is performed as simply and quickly as possible. It is prolonged and attended by ritual only in the village context (see p. 74 *seq.*, 143). Burial is primarily the concern of the immediate nuclear family, who may be assisted by friends or relatives. Too much display of grief is considered very bad, and one of the major concerns of the ensuing *molimo* is to reaffirm life. In a sense, then, the *molimo* is more properly associated with life, occasioned though it may be by death.

The burial over, the camp is abandoned and the mourners are at once under an even stricter obligation to minimize their demonstrations of grief. The opening of the *molimo* festival is informal and casual, and depends on how long it takes for the new camp to get set-

St Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

him awake with her wailing and would probably forget to cook for him. He set off at once for the village, grumbling, and Moke went with him. Masisi started one of his loud tirades, saying in his sharp voice that Cephu never looked after his children properly, so it was no wonder they died. This must have reminded Kenge of his joke, because he started laughing again, or perhaps he was laughing at Masisi, but Masisi got angrier than ever and said he was going straight to the village to tell Cephu what he thought of him. He stamped angrily after Njobo and Moke, still shouting deprecating remarks about the bereaved father.

Kenge laughed happily and said that there was going to be a dreadful noise when Masisi got back to the village, so we would do better to stay where we were until it was all over. Manyalibo, who had not said a word, suggested looking for *itaba*, a sweet edible root, and with food our foremost thought we set off.

When we got back to the village in the late afternoon we found everyone sitting around outside their little houses, staring gloomily at nothing in particular. Masisi was still talking loudly, pointing at the sky and over in the direction of Cephu's camp, from which I could hear women wailing, and saying that it was a shame that Cephu should let his children die and cause everyone so much trouble. Tungana mournfully said that he didn't like funerals; the Negroes made so much noise at them. Masisi's younger brother, Mambunia, still a bachelor because one of his legs was crippled with paralysis and he was not able to hunt well enough to support a family, added in shrill falsetto that Cephu was so inconsiderate and such a trouble-maker that he would probably let his daughter die completely—completely and absolutely.

I did not understand what he meant at first, but it provoked an immediate response from Asofalinda, Ekianga's widowed sister. She strode across the camp, marching with long swinging strides to where Mambunia was sitting, his paralyzed leg stuck out in front

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

763
761 of him. She pointed her skinny hand at him, flinging her arm back-
152 ward and forward with every step, rhythmically enumerating all the
578 reasons why he should keep his mouth shut. He was a great one at complaining about other people being trouble-makers, but he made more noise than anyone. Besides, one should never say that anyone had died completely unless they had died for ever.

Madyadya, Manyalibo's adopted son, lazily wandered in between them and spitting on the ground said that Asofalinda made a pretty good noise herself. Old Moke laughed noiselessly. Asofalinda strode back to her house and slammed the fine wooden door; Mambunia continued to grumble to himself for a few minutes, and Masisi asked who was going to give him some tobacco.

761 It seemed that the girl was very ill with dysentery but was not
763 yet dead. The Pygmies express various degrees of illness by saying
953 that someone is hot, with fever, ill, dead, completely or absolutely dead, and, finally, dead for ever.

763 Unhappily, early the next morning loud wailing from Cephu's
152 camp, a quarter of a mile away, told us that the little girl was now dead for ever. When someone is ill the women relatives will wail, but it is a formal act, perhaps copied from the Negroes for whom it is an obligation. But when someone really dies, for ever, there is among the Pygmies a burst of uncontrollable grief, not only from relatives, but from friends. Even men will weep if they have been close to the dead person. It is a very different sound, and a terrible one, and that is what we heard shortly after dawn.

764 The funeral took place the same day, directed by the Negroes.
[123] I helped with the digging of the grave, but Kenge, Kelemoke, Amabosu, and Masisi's eldest son Ageronga were the chief diggers.
[177] The Negroes lent the tools and stood there, giving instructions, and they became impatient and angry when we stopped and climbed out of the grave for a smoke. The young Pygmies laughed and joked, and

3: Tumbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

Kelemoke, although he was a close relative of the girl's, was in particularly good humor.

Meanwhile the body had been bathed, scented, wrapped in a white cloth, tied up in a mat and placed on a rough wooden bier. This was strictly according to Negro custom. In the forest the Pygmies would have been unable to get the soap and scent and cloth, for one thing, and would not have had the tools to dig an elaborate grave, for another. The bier was brought to the graveyard, which lay behind the village, in a noisy, wailing procession of Pygmies and Negroes. The body was carefully lowered into the grave. Rather grotesquely they made sure which end was which by grasping the head and twisting it under its covering. The body was oriented, laid on its side in a niche that had been cut under one wall of the grave, and held in place with three stones. Sticks were placed at an angle over it, and these were covered with leaves, then with moist earth, so that no soil should fall on the body. Then the grave was filled, some people throwing in a handful of earth, others just standing and watching. The mother and older sister tried to throw themselves into the half-filled grave and had to be dragged away. Cephu was weeping so bitterly that he had to be supported. Among the Negroes there is a strict ruling about funeral protocol—who is allowed to wail and who is not, who is allowed to support the chief mourner, a purely formal gesture, and so on. But this funeral followed no such rules. Whenever it made no difference to them the Pygmies followed the Negro custom, but the moment they wanted to go their own way they did.

Before the grave was completely covered the women left. The Negroes directed the operation of guiding the spirit safely away by pouring a bucket of water, first into a hole left in the earth above the head of the corpse, then down the grave and off in the direction of the forest, away from the village. To the Negroes the forest is the place for spirits of the dead; they must be kept away from the village at all costs.

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

village at all costs. Rather to my surprise this struck the Pygmies as being funny, and they began sniggering. Kenge, carefully dusting the last specks of earth from his spotless shorts, pretended to be severe and said this was no time for laughter. He then promptly cracked a joke at the expense of the Negroes and joined his friends in howls of mirth. When Pygmies laugh it is hard not to be affected; they hold onto one another as if for support, slap their sides, snap their fingers, and go through all manner of physical contortions. If something strikes them as particularly funny they will even roll on the ground, but this time the disapproving looks they got from the Negroes discouraged them.

The Negroes, having restored order, went on to the business of settling who was responsible for the death of the child. To them no death is natural; some evil spirit, some witch or sorcerer, had cursed the girl with dysentery and made her die. They tried to find out who had been fighting in Cephu's camp, who were the enemies of the girl's family. Their concern was a real one, for if the witch was not found, it might strike at them next. But the Pygmies were not co-operative. They were bored and listless. The girl had died and that was that. The Negroes finally gave up and we all returned, washing from head to foot as we crossed over the Nepussi.

Back in the main camp everything was normal. Only in Cephu's little camp was there quiet, subdued wailing from the house of the child's parents. There was some discussion as to whether or not the molimo should be called out. Cephu said in an aggressive manner that it should be, the only trouble being that he didn't have one. Certain families own them; others do not but when in need can borrow them from relatives. Cephu promptly called on Njobo, who reluctantly agreed.

That night, after the evening meal, a small number of men from the main camp went over to Cephu's camp and sat down around the central fire. The women and children were in their huts; some

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 PO4 Pygmies PO4
Mbuti

village, brandishing one hand above his head, telling everyone to stop making such a dreadful noise, that it was not doing any good to anybody. "Crying is a matter for the immediate family," he said. "She was a mother to us all, but for all of us to cry is just too much noise." He clutched his head to illustrate the point, then grabbed a couple of children, one of them his own, and sent them flying. By now his temper was no longer artificial, and the women decided it was wiser to keep out of his way, and left.

As soon as the wailing stopped and the door to Ekianga's house was closed, with only the family inside, the cloud of depression lifted. Everyone started talking about the imminent return to the forest—about where they would go to hunt, where they would go for mushrooms and for fruit and nuts and honey, and where they should make their first camp. All agreed that it should be far away—but not so far that old Tungana could not come.

That night there was a little wailing from Ekianga's house, and a few women both in the main camp and in Cephu's camp were crying to themselves. Every now and then Masisi's sharp voice was raised, telling them all to go to sleep.

The funeral took place the following morning, again conducted by the Negroes. Balekimito was buried next to Cephu's daughter, and once again, when the grave had been filled in and the women had left, the Negroes tried to conduct a council to discover who had been responsible for the death. But the Pygmies were in no mood to play games. They simply walked off after the women, washed themselves perfunctorily in the Nepussi and returned to the camp to start preparations for going back to the forest.

After all, if Balekimito had died she had died well, and there was a lot to do—plantations to raid and food to steal. This was no time to fool around with Negro notions of witchcraft and sorcery; this was a time to get back to the forest as quickly as possible and to hold the biggest molimo festival the forest had ever seen, to make the forest happy again.

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

P 177 159 754 763 C 563 754

the place, standing in the doors of their huts, listening. One after another said, "Aberi is dead, completely dead."

Apparently he had gone back to his camp, and Tamasa had given him a little hot broth to warm him up, as he complained of being cold. He had gone to sleep, but later, quite suddenly and without any warning, he had awakened with a start, struggling violently as though trying to get up. But some unseen power was clutching at his shoulder, and Aberi gave a loud cry and fell back dead. Within a matter of weeks both the other Pygmies who had been cursed with Aberi had also died, under similar circumstances.

P 177 754 C 563 754

If the Pygmies had believed in witchcraft, such a terrible series of coincidences would certainly have brought forth an accusation. As it was they never even mentioned any possibility other than that the villager might have used poison. This could have been true in Aberi's case—but in all three? The Pygmies shook their heads and said nothing.

P 179 764 C 563 761 764 [754]

Aberi was buried the following afternoon, with villagers officiating. Sansiwake was almost beside himself with grief, and Tamasa had to be dragged bodily away from the grave. When the women had all left, the villagers started their usual inquiry into the death, to see who was responsible. They did not mention their fellow villager from Dar es Salaam, the one who had cursed Aberi; instead they named Tamasa. Kelemoke and Masalito, who had their arms around Sansiwake and were trying to comfort him, turned and looked at the accusers. Kelemoke spoke for them both. He said, quietly, but with considerable feeling, "Tamasa is our sister, Tamasa is our mother. *We* do not kill our own kind."

Without waiting for the villagers to finish their formalities, the Pygmies all returned to their camps and began preparing to leave the village and go back to the forest, where such things do not happen.

165 372 [276] tine in the least possible time. Sometimes this puff knocks him out; he faints, and falls forward into the fire. Very often there are others up about the same business, who, when they hear the thud, will run over and pull the victim out of the fire, in which case he will survive with bad burn scars. Sometimes, however, no one hears him, and the burns are fatal.

765 [764] [273] When a pygmy dies, his kinsmen bury him near the camp. They get bananas or wine ready-made from their Negroes, and a regular bout of wine drinking begins. The members of the deceased's family cover themselves with white pipe clay, and weep and wail for several days. This noisy manifestation of grief is intermittent, and formally controlled. Sometimes they even put it off for two or three days until all the relatives who have been away visiting at other camps can be gathered in. Most of it is done by women, who will weep and wail for a while in concert, then rest together, then weep together again for another spell. Anyone who is really overcome with emotion weeps quietly by him or herself, alone and without interruption.

768 After a few days of this the whole group will break camp and move on to some other site, unless there are strong objections to leaving. In any case, they never return to the grave, and never decorate or touch it.

[P.341-B]